

# Black Church Has The Potential To Shape Community's Future

Guest Editorial  
By Rev. Phillip Davis

During this time of year, when we remember the "Dream" and the "Dreamer", Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and as we look forward to the observance of Black History Month, I can not help but to reflect on the role of the one institution in the black community that has the potential to affect the kind of change that would lead our community to self-determination. The Black Church is the one institution that is capable of leading our community in positive direction as we approach the 1990s. And if we are to reach our God given potential we must begin to share the message of the Gospel of Economic Development.

It is obvious, that in the years to come, black Americans, can not and must not rely on outside institutions and programs to revitalize our communities. We must help ourselves, if we are to become self-sufficient. The church, as one of the most stable institutions in our community, must take the lead in

making sure our people are progressing and staying afloat economically. As an institution concerned about the betterment of mankind in general, and the black community, in particular, the church must preach and



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teach the Gospel of Salvation, which frees individuals from the penalty of sin. However, salvation has a much broader meaning...Jes us came to make men whole and to deliver individuals from the bondage of oppressive laws and values. Our message today, must not only deal with soul salvation, but also with physical deliverance. This includes, not only sickness, but also, dependency and poverty and social conditions which rob individuals of their self-worth.

The concept of the church as

an economic catalyst in the black community is neither new nor radical. The Wheat Street Baptist Church of Atlanta, has been at the forefront of economic development in that city for more than forty years. Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia, through its development firm of Zion Associates, opened a shopping center, and also backed minority-owned wiring, real estate and construction companies. The Allen Temple Baptist Church of Oakland, California owns and operates a 75 unit housing development for low-income and elderly citizens and is near completion on another 51 unit project. Allen Temple also operates a job information center and a credit union with \$1 million in assets. In Charlotte, leading churches such as, Mayfield Memorial Baptist and Little Rock A.M.E. Zion as well as others, have successfully operated or are currently operating apartment projects. Other churches are involved in many volunteer type projects, which is only a portion of what we can

and should be doing. The church can play a major role in the economic stability of the black community by expanding the scope of its economic ventures to include auto repair shops, service stations, car dealerships, retail shops, theaters, and business services such as printing, marketing, computer leasing, catering, etc. Churches typically have office space which is not utilized during business hours. This space can be donated and/or rented at a nominal rate to new business and/or to one person operations.

The church is the ideal place to set up typing and office administration classes, while at the same time training individuals, the church would also offer secretarial services to other businesses. While operating emergency food pantries, the church can also teach retail marketing to those who volunteer. The potential and the ideas are limitless. Due to a lack of creativity and

our dependence on outside institutions our communities have deteriorated. But, the Good News is that the Black Church can promote, lead and direct an economic turnaround in the black community. I believe that if we are to see our communities lifted out of the cycle of poverty and consumerism, that the Black Church must lead the way.

One last word. Before you agree, if you agree, ask yourself this question, "Who is the church?" The church is not that building that you visit from time to time on Sunday morning. The church is YOU, and unless you get involved in a local fellowship, that has a vision for soul salvation and economic development, the task of revitalizing our community, spiritually and economically, will not get done. You are the key, black professionals and blue collar workers, skilled and semi-skilled, craftsman and laborers, you hold the answer to the church's involvement in economic development. Because, the church is people,

not buildings. And without you sharing your expertise, talents and spiritual gifts, there is no progress to be made. So just as the Gospel of Salvation will not be spread to those who need a Savior, unless you spread that Gospel, so it is with this Gospel of Economic Development. Unless you commit your life to Christ, join the church and share in the vision and commit your time, talent and energy through the church, it will not become a reality.

Nations Ford Church, 7410 Nations Ford Road invites you to write and share your ideas and opinions on ways by which we as a church, can develop business opportunities and assist in the economic development in our communities. And should you desire to become a part of an exciting, new and growing congregation, with a vision for Salvation, both spiritual and physical, we invite you to visit, Nations Ford Church at 7410 Nations Ford Road, Phil Davis is the pastor and can be reached at 598-0919 or 522-6480.

## Why Snyderious Had To Be Fired

By now you should know that the man who calls himself Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder, Snyderious, is a die-hard racist.

You should also know that there are prominent Black people who will ask you to "forgive" him because it suits their own political, professional and business agendas.

One is no better than the other, which just goes to prove that racism is not the real problem.

Take Jimmy Snyderious. Do you seriously believe that this \$750,000-a-year sports commentator, who so openly spoke his racism into a camera, never shared it in private with his colleagues at CBS?

I would rather believe that Snyder represents the fears of most Whites and is more typical of his group than some of the Black apologists are of ours. I do concede, however, that Snyderious is in no way a barometer of the Way Greek people see Blacks. Greeks tend to identify with us because of a common history.

Whites, of course, are putting distance between themselves and Snyder. One White newspaper ran a headline "The Greek: Ignorant or Racist?" What's the difference?

New York's Governor Mario Cuomo said what the Black



Tony Brown's

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apologists should have been saying: "I think probably 20 years ago, Jimmy the Greek would not have been fired instantly for his remarks. Twenty years ago, a lot of people were saying it and getting away with it."

The point I'm making, and the point Gov. Cuomo made, is that a large number of people share this "stupid, stereotypical, ignorant talk," but Blacks cannot afford to reward them for promotion of same.

New York's Mayor Ed Koch called Snyder's remark "outrageous" and made an outrageous proposal to answer them. "We must remember that the man is 70 years old. I believe that he was saying things he

learned as a child. But should he be destroyed at 70 years old?" Snyder destroyed himself. What could Blacks do about that?

And why must Blacks always forgive Whites? If forgiveness is so redemptive, why not give Whites a chance to redeem themselves also? And how do the Black apologists for Snyder's racism know what Martin Luther King would have done?

Koch added insult to insult: "People would say what an extraordinary community the Black community is that it saved the career of this man."

Who cares what "people" -- he really means "White" people -- say. Koch and the others are putting Blacks on the defensive -- as though Blacks had attacked Whites.

It's the old game of White approval all over again. White approval is not necessary, any more than Snyder's approval, to the progress of Black people.

And Snyder and the rest of the racist population don't matter either. But we've got to make sure that overt racism is not rewarded. That's why it was important that CBS fire Snyder.

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## Black Women And An Independent Movement Go Hand In Hand

Recently I have been thinking a lot about what it is that distinguishes Black women as role models.

As a Black woman, as someone who was raised and loved and taught by Black women, as a therapist and a mother, and as a political activist, that question is often on my mind: What do we, as Black women, with our particular experience and place in the world, have to offer to those who look to us for examples?

I do not think we should try to be role models in the traditional sense. In a world shaped and dominated by well-to-do white men, the traditional role assigned to Black women--an Aunt Jemima role of servitude and humility--is not one for any of our people to model themselves on. But I do think that role has taught us something valuable, which we can pass on. We know what unfairness is. We know what it is to be excluded.

The existing political institutions in the United States--specifically the Democratic and Republican parties--do not exist to include us as Black people or as women. The two-party system which controls public policy in this country serves very specific interests: those of white, corporate America--the political and moral descendants of those who wrote a Constitution for wealthy white men of property like themselves. And I don't have to remind you that they were the Founding Fathers. Today still most members of the two parties and nearly all of their leaders are men, and the two parties are institutionally male as well--as organizations, they are dominated by a male attitude and outlook which is different from ours.

This is not to say all men think alike. There are many, many differences among men, just as there are among women. Nevertheless, most of us recognize that by and large men don't look at the world the way women do, their concerns are not exactly the same, their views on what needs to be done, and how, are different from ours. After all, we were brought up very differently



By Lenora Fulani

### BLACK EMPOWERMENT

from men and we spend our lives doing very different kinds of activities. But it is these differences that put women, and in particular Black women, in a unique position to serve as role models in the fight for inclusion and democracy in American society.

There is an erosion of democracy in this country, an ever widening gap between the opinions, attitudes, hopes and dreams of the majority of people and the public policy as articulated and carried out by the two major parties. Democrats and Republicans promulgate pro-war, anti-people, profoundly unfair and exclusionary policies which are at variance with the desires and aspirations for social justice, peace, fairness and inclusion held by the majority of ordinary citizens.

An example: Ten years ago Congressman Ron Dellums of California introduced a national health service bill into the House of Representatives. If enacted, the bill would provide comprehensive health service to every American--workers on the job, women, veterans, the disabled, the elderly and the poor. Despite the fact that most people in this country need and want such legislation, the bill has for ten years never gone anywhere. Now the Democrats have forgotten all about H.R. 2402, as it is currently known, and are scrambling to muster support for Ronald Reagan's catastrophic health bill. They say it's the best they can do. But we say that the people need more than the best that the politicians of the so-called major

parties can do.

Why? Think about the following facts. Elderly Black people are nearly three times as likely to be poor as elderly whites. And one out of three older African-Americans lives in poverty compared to one out of nine elderly whites. In 1986 federal guidelines established that the elderly were poor only if they had less than \$101 per week (\$128 for couples) to spend on all living expenses. Our people are dying because of a lack of democracy.

We must open up the political process to independent parties and candidates that will fight for the necessary social policy changes that ordinary Americans need and desire. We need a new third party to exert leverage on the Democratic party to follow suit. We must have a party that will make health care a right, not a luxury; that will establish decent retirement benefits for the aging; that will assure everyone the right to a decent job.

This is the work that I am undertaking. It is not an easy task. I believe that if we can build an independent movement then we, the people, will finally realize our dream of a decent and caring society.

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## Letters To The Post

### Bob Walton: Forgive, But Don't Forget

Dear Editor:

I write this letter in the hope the few pastors who came out in support of Bob Walton (for District 2 County Commissioner) will read it and reply. There are less than ten pastors in this city who support Walton but they want us to believe most of the black community is in support of him.

I have many questions on the Walton issue. I beg the black ministers to help me.

The main question is: what does this support say about us as a people? Sure we have all sinned. I have not heard one person say they would not forgive Walton. However, after asking for forgiveness, then comes redemption.

While we forgive Walton, we should also say we love him but we don't feel he should be our leader. Once a person misuses the trust he is given he must, over a period of time, regain that trust. We as black people are forgiving people. But, on the other hand, we also have common sense. Forgiveness is one thing but business as usual is another.

Let us look to the Bible for some examples. What about Adam and Eve? When they sinned God forgave them but he put them out of the Garden of Eden. David took Uriah's wife and then had Uriah killed. God forgave him but there was never peace in David's house. King Solomon's sins caused him to lose his kingdom. The point I want to

make is we must forgive but there is still a price we must pay for our wrongdoing.

The thing that troubles me most is the question concerning our young people. What do we say to them now? In the black community, we teach our children to stay out of trouble. And if they do get in trouble we tell them to be adults and take the punishment. We say so many times: if you make your bed hard then you sleep in it. Do we now say to our young people stand as Bob Walton did? Be wrong and drag your wife, child, loved ones and the community along with you?

As an adult, I can see where Walton could lead anyone as well as anyone can. But what do our children see? If we support Walton, then we say this is what the black community is all about. In the black community we have a large number of homes headed by women. In those homes little black boys have only their mother to look up to, in many cases, and someone like Walton outside of the home.

Another question I ask of the pastors who talk of forgiveness and putting Walton back in office is if this is a rule for all? For example, what if you had a treasurer who took \$10,000 from the church and was sent to jail for it and served his time? Once that person was set free and returned to the church asking for forgiveness should you

forgive him and put him back as treasurer? We all know the answer to that question.

In life we don't just forgive and that's it. If that was the case there would be no need for probation officers. I feel many of us believe there is one set of rules for ministers and another set for laymen.

What does our support of Walton say about our love of good leaders?

I love Walton but I cannot support him because of what it says to the youth and what it says about the community. Walton still needs to ask his church, the community, and the Jones family for forgiveness. Black ministers should know the community is looking to them for leadership. If we as a people are to move forward then we must take a stand for what is right.

As I have stated, we have all sinned. It is how we handle those sins that counts. When we were young we may have stolen apples from a neighbor's tree. This was wrong and when we got caught we paid a price. Do we now say to our young people it is alright to steal because we stole too?

What we do with the Walton issue will be with us a long time to come. I want to go on record as one who's standing for that which is right.

JAMES E BARNETT

## WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

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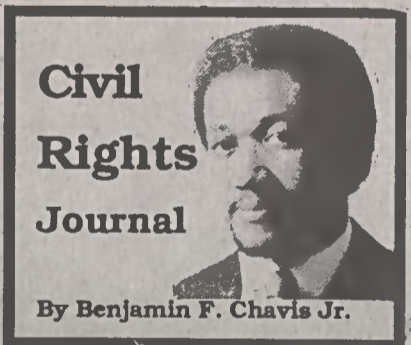
## Mississippi: The Movement Renewed

In many places these days you get a sense of the Movement renewed. Nowhere is this more evident than in Natchez, Mississippi, in Adams County. For the past month the African American community of that city of 22,000 has been engaged in an effective economic boycott of the white-owned commercial district. They have done so over a concern which takes precedence over all others -- their children.

As African American Alderman George Harden of Natchez said, "We can no longer sit by while those in authority make unwise and unchallenged decisions that will continue to have a negative impact upon the children of Natchez for the rest of their lives."

What is at issue here is a school system which is 70% African American but which continues to be white-run. In fact, the school administration is 87% white: all 11 department heads are white and three of the four assistant superintendents of education are white. Interestingly enough, the one African American superintendent is the only one of the four to hold a doctorate.

In 1979 a federal government study showed that Natchez was among 15 of the most segregated school systems in the nation. What this means is that North Natchez High School, which is all-Black, has no auditorium, an inadequate library, an inadequate gym without even a track field and a limited curriculum/South Natchez, the white school, is located just two miles up the highway. It not only has an au-



Civil Rights Journal  
By Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.

ditorium, its auditorium is air conditioned, as is its cafeteria and its gym. It also has a track field and a considerably more advanced curriculum. For months the Black elected officials from Adams County met with the powers-that-be to gain improvements. Their plea fell on deaf ears. That's when these black elected officials became boycott leaders. Alderman Harden, County Supervisor Phillip West and State Representative Barney Schoby joined forces and organized the Concerned Citizens of Natchez. In December they were joined by a fourth official, newly elected county supervisor Thomas Campbell.

When they announced the boycott, they did so at a press conference attended by 45 community leaders and heads of organizations. Since then, the regular meetings of the Concerned Citizens group have never had less than 400 people in attendance. And the most recent program, held on Martin Luther King's birthday, drew over 700 people, as well as a number of Black elected officials from all over the state of Mississippi in

support of the boycott effort.

These days, very few African Americans can be seen shopping in downtown Natchez. Stores like K-Mart and Kroger's food stores are already beginning to feel the heat. And the Natchez/Adams County Chamber of Commerce admits that the boycott is having a great impact on the community. When asked why the boycott has been so successful, Alderman Harden pointed to the Black elected officials, noting, "Each of us represents many thousands of people and we've represented them well for years, so the people trust us. They know that we wouldn't get out there -- or get them out there -- unless we had our facts and our strategy together." Indeed, their strategy is very together.

Car pools are coordinated through the boycott headquarters from 9 in the morning to 9 every night. No one is turned away. Similar to the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, the car pools are staffed by volunteers. Much sacrifice is involved. Some folks have to travel as much as 125-200 miles away, even going into Louisiana to get what they want. But they help each other with rides, for this is a united effort. As Alderman Harden mentioned, "Wherever there's a cause, there's sacrifice. The people know that when we took this thing on."

Yes, the spirit of the Movement continues to be renewed in places like Natchez, Mississippi. And each effort, each success, contributes to sustaining the ongoing freedom movement. For this, we should all be thankful.